A Profile of Service-Learning in Iowa

Executive Summary

February 2000

A Statewide
Survey of
Public Schools

Contact:
Joseph Herrity
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319
515-281-3290

Author:
Mari Kemis
RISE
E005 Lagomarcino Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

Service-learning is a method of teaching and learning which engages students in solving problems and addressing issues in their school or greater community as part of their total educational program.

Source: Iowa Department of Education

State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

State Board of Education

Corine A. Hadley, President, Newton
Sally J. Frudden, Vice President, Charles City
Gregory A. Forristall, Macedonia
Gregory D. McClain, Cedar Falls
Mary Jean Montgomery, Spencer
Donald L. Roby, Decorah
Gene E. Vincent, Carroll
Kay Wagner, Bettendorf
John C. White, Iowa City

Administration

Ted Stilwill, Director and Executive Officer
        of the State Board of Education
Gail Sullivan, Chief of Policy and Planning

Division of Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education

Judy Jeffrey, Administrator
Brenda Oas, Chief, Bureau of Children, Family and
        Community Services
Joe Herrity, Consultant, Community Education and
        Service Learning

A Profile of Service-Learning in Iowa

The Profile of Service-Learning in Iowa was intended to assess and present the status of service-learning within Iowa's public school districts in developing service-learning programs. Developed by Iowa Service Learning Partners (ISLP) and conducted for the Iowa Department of Education by Iowa State University's Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) during the 1998-99 school year, the surveys were completed by curriculum directors, directors of instruction, superintendents, principals, counselors, school-to-work coordinators, and service-learning coordinators in 239 of 375 school districts (64% return rate).

For this survey, community service, service-learning, and community education are defined as follows:

■ Community service is defined as any voluntary student activities that meet important community needs.

■ Service-learning is the integration of community or school-based service activities with academic skills and content, and involves students reflecting on and learning from their service experiences as well as making valuable contributions to their community.

■ Community education is the concept of providing opportunities for local community members, schools, and other organizations to become partners in addressing educational and community issues through lifelong learning, community involvement, and efficient use of resources.

This profile of service-learning in Iowa provided key results in several areas, including Iowa public schools' commitment to service-learning, what is essential to starting and sustaining a service-learning program, how service-learning is integrated into the curriculum, the support that schools are using for training, information, and assistance, and how schools are funding service-learning programs. Key findings include:

Commitment to Service-Learning in Iowa Schools

- One hundred eighteen school districts in Iowa have made commitments to implement service-learning programs in various grades in their schools or throughout the district as a whole. Almost half of the districts responding to the survey reported that they offered service-learning programs during the 1998-99 school year, implementing a program in at least one grade level within the district. They reported that they implemented service-learning programs most often throughout the K-12 grades, at the middle and high school levels, or in grades nine through 12.

- Fourteen percent of the districts responding reported that they had a districtwide service-learning program. Fewer than one in seven districts overall reported having a districtwide service-learning coordinator.

- Most of the districts (75% overall and 84% of districts with service-learning programs) indicated that they are interested in learning more about integrating service-learning into the curriculum.

- Two-thirds of the districts say they would be more likely to hire a teacher who has had training in service-learning among equally qualified candidates, indicating the value of incorporating service-learning within teacher preparation courses at the university level.

- According to the districts responding, service-learning is becoming a formal part of district policy for almost half of the districts, which reported having written mission statements, goals, or policies that encourage service learning. At this time, 3% of the districts have board policy that includes service-learning as a graduation requirement.

Starting and Sustaining a Service-Learning Program

- Of the 118 Iowa districts with service-learning programs, 59 districts have had service-learning programs for three years or less, while 59 have supported programs for more than three years.

- Regardless of whether a service-learning program is in the beginning stages or has been around for some years, teacher interest and administrative support were seen as essential in starting a service-learning program.

- Sustaining a service-learning program requires a different focus than starting one. A service-learning coordinator and funding are the two components most often cited as essential to sustaining a program.

- All districts agreed that the challenges for developing a service-learning program were time, resources (financial or other), teacher interest, having a developed curriculum and trained personnel, and student interest.

Integrating Service-Learning into the Curriculum

- Since service-learning can be applied to many areas, it is often integrated into other district initiatives depending on interest areas and priorities in local schools. Typically service-learning activities are included in four other programs, with some districts incorporating service-learning in up to 15 other district programs.

- Over a third of the Iowa districts are integrating service-learning into the following programs: school-to-work, school improvement, character education, gifted and talented, safe and drug-free schools, vocational education, at-risk, guidance, and mentoring programs.

Support for Service-Learning Training, Information, and Assistance

- Within the past five years, responding districts have used a variety of resources for training purposes. Primarily, they have used local resources, such as local school personnel, other district resources, and AEA consultants for information and assistance.

- In contrast to the past five years, districts will be looking outside of their local areas for assistance in the future. They plan to seek information and assistance from other model programs, AEA consultants, outside service-learning consultants and trainers, and web-based information and training.

Funding to Support Service-Learning

- Districts are using many funding sources to support service-learning activities and programs. Over 60% of districts responding indicated that funding for service-learning came from general funds. One in four districts are funding service-learning through school-to-work funds, community contributions, and teacher pocket. Other funding sources include funds designated for at-risk, Phase III, instructional support levy, or Title I, as well contributions from families or individuals and other sources.

- ComServ Iowa grants are funding service-learning in part for approximately 25% of the districts responding.

- Typically, districts are combining various sources of funding to support service-learning, using an average of two to three funding sources, with some using up to ten different sources. Established service-learning programs use more funding sources on average to support their programs.

- Over 70% of the districts endorsed legislative action for funding to implement programs.

APPENDIX

Service-Learning Survey Instrument

Iowa Department of Education
Community Service-Learning Survey

Respondent Information

Name of survey respondent _____   Phone _____

Title _____

Who should we contact for more information about your district's service-learning activities?

Name _____   Title _____

Phone _____   Fax _____   E-Mail _____

Please route to person in your district responsible for curriculum _____

If you would like a copy of the final report, please check here: .... ❑ Yes ❑ No

---

1. District **demographics**.
   In your district:

	PreK	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
How many students are at the respective levels?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How many teachers are at the respective levels?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How many teachers implemented service-learning in classroom curriculum?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. How many **years** has a service-learning program been in existence in the indicated grade levels?

PreK	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Does your school district have a **district wide**:

   Service-learning program? ....   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

   Community education program? ....   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

   Student mentoring program? ....   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

   Character development/education program? ....   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Do not know

4. If you **have not implemented** a district wide service-learning program, do you have a timetable to do so?

    ☐ No interest in   ☐ Currently in the   ☐ Fully implemented
       starting a program   planning stages   within the next 3 years
    ☐ Other: _____

5. Does your school district have a **district wide**:

    A) Volunteer coordinator? . . . .   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

          If yes, please state name: _____

    B) Service-learning coordinator? . . . .   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

          If yes, please state name: _____

    C) Character-development/education coordinator? . . . .   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

          If yes, please state name: _____

    D) Community education coordinator? . . . .   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

          If yes, please state name: _____

6. Does your district have a written mission statement, goals or policy
that encourages service-learning?   . . . .   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

7. Rank order the top three components **essential to starting** a service-learning program in your district
(1 being the most essential).

Information on other service-learning programs	_____	Funding. Please identify _____ . . . _____
School board interest	_____	Student graduation requirement . . _____
Administrative support	_____	Time . . . . _____
Teacher interest	_____	Model program . . . . _____
Student interest	_____	Parent interest . . . . _____
Community interest	_____	Teacher in service training sessions _____
Adoption of a school wide project (e.g., one day highway adoption service project)	_____	Actively searching for new employees who have service-learning training . . . . _____
Other. Please elaborate _____ _____ .	_____	Appointment of a community service or service-learning coordinator . . . . _____

8. Rank order the top three components **essential to sustaining** a district wide service-learning program (1 being the most essential):

A service-learning coordinator _____   A student graduation requirement _____

An already developed school
wide project .... _____   Employees with service-learning
experiences/training .... _____

Research and literature ...... _____   Networking with other practitioners _____

Funding .... _____   In service training opportunities .. _____

Outside training/speakers .... _____   Student interest .... _____

Student performance assessment _____   Curriculum development .... _____

Teacher evaluation/portfolio .. _____   Community involvement/support . _____

Other. Please identify

Model program .... _____   _____.

9. Rank order the top three **challenges for developing** a service-learning program (1 being the most significant challenge):

Resources (financial or other) ... _____   Administrative interest .... _____

Time .... _____   School board interest .... _____

Developed curriculum .... _____   School board policy .... _____

Trained personnel .... _____   Community interest/support ... _____

Teacher interest .... _____   Student interest .... _____

Other. Please elaborate _____. .. _____

10. Does the School Board have a **policy** that (please review definitions on the instruction sheet):

Includes service-learning as a graduation requirement? .... ❑ Yes ❑ No

Includes community service as a graduation requirement? .... ❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, how many (clock) hours of community service are necessary? .... _____

11. Is community service used as a disciplinary measure in your district? .... ❑ Yes ❑ No

12. What current district **initiatives include service-learning?** (check all that apply)

❑ At-Risk   ❑ School Improvement   ❑ Exceptional (Special)
❑ Brain Research   ❑ Gifted and Talented   Education
   Applications   ❑ Guidance   ❑ School-To-Work
❑ Character Education   ❑ Mentoring   ❑ Success 4
❑ Community Education   ❑ Multiple Intelligence   ❑ Title I
❑ Early Childhood   ❑ Safe and Drug Free   ❑ Vocational Education
❑ ESL   Schools
❑ Other:

13. Among equally qualified candidates, would your district be more likely to hire a teacher who has had training in service-learning? . . . . ☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Which of the following **resources** has your district **used** within the past five years for **service-learning training**? (check all that apply)

☐ Local district
☐ Current school personnel from your own district
☐ ICN
☐ Local AEA consultants
☐ National Clearinghouses
☐ Other: _____

☐ Outside service-learning consultants/trainers
☐ Colleges and/or university personnel
☐ Other model programs
☐ State conference
☐ State Department of Education personnel
☐ Web-based information/training

15. What future resources would you be interested in? (check all that apply)

☐ Local district
☐ Current school personnel from your own district
☐ ICN
☐ Local AEA consultants
☐ National Clearinghouses
☐ Other: _____

☐ Outside service-learning consultants/trainers
☐ Colleges and/or university personnel
☐ Other model programs
☐ State conference
☐ State Department of Education personnel
☐ Web-based information/training

16. Are you interested in learning more about integrating service-learning into the curriculum? . . . . ☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Is your school district **aware** of the ComServ Iowa Grant* Program for service-learning? . . . . ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Has your school district ever **applied** for a ComServ Iowa Grant*? . . . . ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Has your school district ever **received** a ComServ Iowa Grant*? . . . . ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. What **legislative action** would support additional or further service-learning activities in your school district? (check all that apply)

☐ Establishment of a statewide resource center for service-learning agencies and programs.
☐ Legislate a service-learning graduation requirement.
☐ Mandate teacher preparation training in service-learning.
☐ Provide funding to implement a program.
☐ Other: _____

21. What **funding source(s)** support service learning in your district? (check all that apply)

☐ General Fund
☐ Phase III Funds
☐ At-Risk Funds
☐ School-To-Work Funds
☐ Other: _____

☐ Community Contribution (monetary and/or in-kind)
☐ Instructional Support Levy
☐ ComServ Iowa Grant

☐ Title I Funds
☐ Teacher Pocket
☐ Family/Individual (monetary and/or in-kind)

Further information regarding the ComServ Iowa Grant Program may be obtained from Joe Herrity, Department of Education (515)281-3290.

A Profile of Service-Learning in Iowa ■